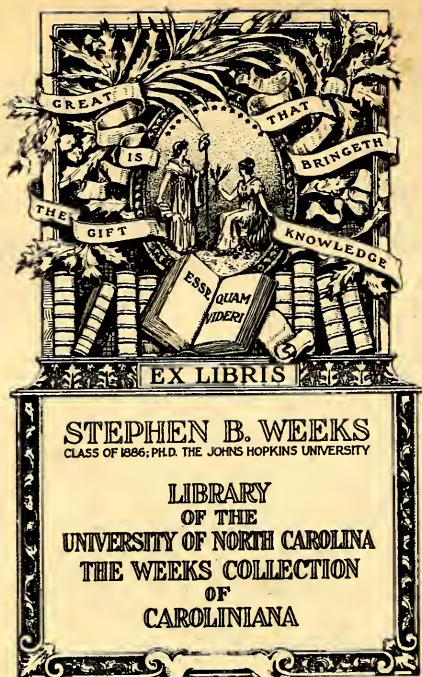


Cp970.75
S.760

One out of many

Spofford



W. B. CUSHING
COLLEGE
"One out of many"

or
William B. Cushing

by
Harriet Prescott Spofford
from

Harper's Mag., July, 1874
Vol. 49, 256-267



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2013

<http://archive.org/details/oneofmany00spof>

known. For after Cousin Conrad's departure we seemed to close up together—she and I—in one another's loving arms; understanding one another thoroughly, though still, as ever, we did not speak one word about him that all the world might not have heard.

Outwardly, our life was wholly free from care. We had as much of each other's society, or nearly as much, as we had ever had, with the cares of poverty entirely removed. My grandfather proved as good as his word, and all that Cousin Conrad had said of him he justified to the full. He received my mother with cordial welcome, and treated her from first to last with unflinching respect and consideration. She had every luxury that I could desire for her, and she needed luxuries, for after her illness she was never her strong, active self again. But she was her dear self always—the sweetest, brightest little mother in all the world.

To the world itself, however, we were two very grand people—Mrs. and Miss Picardy of Broadlands. At which we often laughed between ourselves, knowing that we were in reality exactly the same as in our shut-up poverty days—just “my mother and I.”

Cousin Conrad's letters were our great enjoyment. He never missed a single mail. Generally he wrote to her, with a little note inside for me, inquiring about my studies and amusements, and telling me of his own, though of himself personally he said very little. Whether he were well or ill, happy or miserable, we could guess only by indirect evidence. But one thing was clear enough—his intense longing to be at home.

“Not a day shall I wait,” he said in a letter to my grandfather—“not a single day after the term of absence I have prescribed to myself is ended.” And my grandfather coughed, saying, mysteriously, “that Conrad always had his crochets; he hoped this would be the last of them; it was not so very long to look forward.”

Did I look forward? Had I any dreams of a possible future? I can not tell. My life was so full and busy—my mother seemed obstinately determined to keep it busy—that I had little time for dreams.

She took me out into society, and I think both she and my grandfather enjoyed society's receiving me well. I believe I made what is called a “sensation” in both Dublin and London. I was even presented at court, and the young Queen said a kind word or two about me, in her Majesty's own pleasant way. Well, well, all that is gone by now; but at the time I enjoyed it. It was good to be worth something—even to look at—and I liked to be liked very much, until some few did rather more than like me, and then I was sometimes very unhappy. But my grandfather kept his promise; he never urged upon me any offer of marriage. And my mother too—my tender mother—

asked me not a single question as to the why and the wherefore, though, one after another, I persistently refused them all.

“When she is one-and-twenty, my dear, we may hope she will decide. By then she will have time to know her own mind. Conrad said so, and Conrad is always right.”

Thus said my grandfather to my mother, and they both smiled at one another: they were the best of friends now, and so they remained to the last.

The last came sooner than any of us had thought—for Cousin Conrad's prophecies were not realized. When we had had only three years in which to make him happy—and I know we did make him happy—my dear grandfather died; suddenly, painlessly, without even having had time to bid us good-by. It was a great shock, and we mourned for him as if we had loved him all our lives. Ay, even though, to the great surprise of our affectionate friends—a large circle now—he left us only a small annuity—the rest of his fortune going, as the will proved he had always meant it to go, to Cousin Conrad. I was so glad!

Cousin Conrad was now obliged to come home. We had only one line from him, when he got the sad news, begging my mother to remain mistress at Broadlands until he arrived there, and adding that, if it did not trouble us very much, he should be grateful could we manage to meet him at Southampton, he being “rather an invalid.”

So we went. I need not say any thing about the journey. When it ended, my mother, just at the last minute, proposed that I should remain in the carriage, at the dock gates, while she went forward to the ship's side, where we could dimly perceive a crowd disembarking.

They disembarked. I saw them land in happy groups, with equally happy friends to greet them, laughing and crying and kissing one another. They all came home, safe and sound, all but one—*my* one. Deep in the Red Sea, where the busy ships sail over him, and the warm waves rock him in his sleep, they had left him—as much as could die of him—my Cousin Conrad.

* * * * *

He had died of the fatal family disease which he knew he was doomed to, though the warm climate of the East and the pure air of the hills kept it dormant for a long time. But some accidental exposure brought on inflammation of his lungs; after which he began to sink rapidly. The doctors told him he would never reach England alive; but he was determined to try. I heard it was wonderful how long the brave spirit upbore the feeble body. He did not suffer much, but just lay every day on deck; alone, quite alone, as far as near friends went—yet watched and tended by all the passengers, as if he had belonged to them for years. In

the midst of them all, these kind strange faces, he one day suddenly, when no one expected it, "fell on sleep." For he looked as if asleep—they said—with the sun shining on his face, and his hands folded, as quiet as a child.

All that was his became mine. He left it me—and it was a large fortune—in a brief will, made hastily the very day after he had received the tidings of my grandfather's death. He gave me every thing absolutely, both "because it was my right," and "because he had always loved me."

He had always loved me. Then, why grieve?

In course of years I think I have almost ceased to grieve. If, long ago, merely because I loved him, I had felt as if already married, how much more so now, when nothing could ever happen to change this feeling, or make my love for him a sin?

I do not say there was not an intermediate and terrible time, a time of utter blankness and darkness, when I "walked through the valley of the shadow of death;" alone, quite alone. But by-and-by I came out of it into the safe twilight—we came out of it,

I should say, for she had been close beside me all the while, my dearest mother!

She helped me to carry out my life, as like his as I could make it, in the way I knew he would most approve. And, so doing, it has not been by any means an unhappy life. I have had his wealth to accomplish all his schemes of benevolence; I have sought out his friends and made them mine, and been as true to them as he would have been. In short, I have tried to do all that he was obliged to leave undone, and to make myself contented in the doing of it.

"Contented," I think, was the word people most often used concerning us during the many peaceful years we spent together, my mother and I. Now it is only I. But I am, I think, a contented old woman yet. My own are still my own—perhaps the more so as I approach the time of reunion. For even here, to those who live in it and understand what it means, there is, both for us and for our dead, both in this life and in the life to come, the same "kingdom of heaven."

Of course I have always remained Elma Picardy.

THE END.

ONE OF MANY.

THE world just now is full of heroes, for the wars of the late decade are resplendent with actions well fulfilling the poet's prophecy of the period when

"Many a darkness into the light shall leap,
And shine in the sudden making of splendid names."

But among all the laureled number it has not been our fortune to hear of any whose exploits eclipse in brilliancy and *élan* those of one of our young naval officers who entered the lists a stripling, and whom the close of the war found, at the age of twenty-two, with the rank of lieutenant-commander, and with the engrossed thanks of Congress and of the Navy Department in his possession, together with countless testimonials, medals, and acknowledgments from generals of division, Union Leagues, and corporate bodies in all parts of the country: tributes to deeds which bring back to us a remembrance of those of the old heroic days—deeds so great that men became great through the mere recital of them. And certainly he who so often and so gallantly risked life and fame for his country as Lieutenant-Commander William B. Cushing did deserves some other record than the disjointed and fragmentary one hidden away in the archives of the Bureau of State; and it is a task full of interest to gather one rumor and another, sift their truth, and put official statement by statement, till the story

of those five glorious years of his service stands complete.

Midshipman Cushing sailed from Boston in the frigate *Minnesota*, and reached Hampton Roads in May, 1861—a lad then scarcely seventeen years old, but fully determined upon playing a great part in the great events to come. The *Cumberland*, the *Quaker City*, and the *Monticello*, men-of-war, all lay in the roads, and the latter of them, which has the honor of having been the first ship under fire in the rebellion, young Cushing subsequently commanded. The fleet had not been at anchor a single day when five schooners, loaded with tobacco, were captured; and that night the young midshipman took into port the *Delaware Farmer*, the first prize of the war. During the next month he was on duty with the blockading squadron on the Carolina coast; but in August he was again in Hampton Roads, and was in the first launch with those sent to storm a battery and burn some small vessels; and in the same month he sailed in the *Minnesota* to the assault of the Hatteras forts, the squadron consisting of the flagship with six other men-of-war and some steam-transports, and being the largest that had ever sailed together under the American flag. The waters to which Hatteras Inlet gave entrance at that time swarmed with privateers and blockade-runners, and its possession was an object of importance, and was guarded by the two forts, Clark and

Hatteras. As the squadron moved into line, and the first shot fired by the *Wabash* was answered by the rebel guns instantaneously, and every ship seemed suddenly sheeted in flame, the scene heightened by the contrast of perfect peace otherwise on sea and sky during all the bright summer day, we can easily imagine what an experience it was to the boy for the first time under the fire of one of those engagements to which his fancy had thrilled a thousand times, and his enjoyment of it may be known by the eagerness with which from that moment he plunged into every thing affording any promise of the same excitement and danger.

During the following winter Midshipman Cushing did blockading duty on the *Cambridge*, and saw some hot work with a party "cutting out" a schooner up a narrow stream, being attacked by and defeating a large body of infantry and artillery. He was often in this stormy season out in open boats for hours together, with the sea breaking over him, till it was sometimes necessary to hoist him on board, too stiff with ice and sleet to bend a joint. But it was at this time that the great *Merrimac* fight came off, a part of which he was—a part of the Saturday's black despondency that saw the *Cumberland* go down and the white flag flutter from the peak of the *Congress*, of the Sunday's superb confidence, when the rebel giant, with the sun glistening on her iron shields, bore down on her grounded antagonist, and never seeming to see an idle mote in the distance till a 200-pounder came from it, crashing through her consort, which turned and fled, a wreck, while shot after shot beat and brayed her own sides till the skies rang with the echoes, and the fate of the old navies, with their snowy billows of canvas, was settled by the victory of the little black iron turret.

Of course the young sailor had, as time went on, the usual number of the escapades that seem to be the peculiar properties of his class, one, not the least, of which happened after the fight at Malvern Hill, when, being ashore with his admiral, and fired, by the account of his valiant brother, with the desire of sharing in an affair that might be similar to the seven days' battle, he boldly made off in search of adventure, and rode to review the army on President Lincoln's staff, finding himself under arrest on his return, though presently, with the proverbial luck of the middy, released from duress. He was destined, however, soon to leave that fortunate and irresponsible condition, and in July, 1862, was promoted to a lieutenancy, the intermediate grades being overlooked, and was ordered to the sounds of North Carolina; and, having turned to account the year's stern schooling, there the career that has rendered his name remarkable really began. And it may be mentioned

here that it was not only in the art of the sea-fight that he had accomplished himself, but in the more difficult art of attaching men to him in such wise that they would hazard life and fortune to follow him, a thing absolutely indispensable to his undertakings. Of this attachment of his companions and subordinates an instance may be cited to the purpose, though so trifling. This occurred once when the lieutenant went to Washington with dispatches, and when, chancing to look over the hotel register, he found the names just above his own were those of the officers who had ventured with him on that terrible night of the affair of the *Albemarle*, and whom he had supposed to be gone to their long home. He had worn on the coat which he had thrown off that night upon taking to the water a ribbon with a gold chain and locket of some value; and on springing into the room where were the officers, in the sorry guise of their prison habiliments, after the first greetings were over he saw one take from under the collar of his blouse some of the buttons of that coat, one the locket, one the chain, and another the ribbon, the men having carried these articles, unsuspected and untouched, through all the want and privations of four months in rebel prisons.

It having been decided not long subsequently to Lieutenant Cushing's promotion to make a combined movement of army and navy against the town of Franklin—afterward destroyed by the army—an agreement was entered into for the army to open the attack, and the navy to send three vessels up the Blackwater in order to intercept the retreat of the seven thousand rebels. For some reason or other the plan was changed, but the messenger dispatched by the commanding officer with the account of the change did not reach his destination in season; and presuming that all was to be as arranged, three vessels moved up the Blackwater at the appointed hour, and were presently engaged, with a couple of hundred men and a few cannon, by all the strength of the enemy, in a stream exceedingly narrow, and so crooked that lines had constantly to be taken from the ships and wound about the trees on the shore, to obtain purchase and haul the bows round the bend. At last, on working past a sharp angle of the shore, they came upon an impassable barricade, an abatis formed of the great trees felled from both banks directly across the stream, at a point where the force of the angry current drifted them strongly in toward the left side; and at the moment every object on the bank became alive, and blazed with a deadly fire, and such a yell burst forth from every quarter that it seemed to belong to the universal air. Captain Flusser instantly ordered all hands into shelter, since it would have been the merest bravado to at-

tempt fighting his few men on an open deck; but Lieutenant Cushing, chancing to glance over the side, saw a mass of infantry rushing down under cover of this fire to board the vessel that lay in such a cruel ambushade, and calling for volunteers, he dashed out, cast loose the howitzer, and by the aid of half a dozen men and an officer, wheeled it to the other side of the deck. Before the piece could be leveled the seven men lay dead and dying around him, and, alone on the deck, he sent the death-dealing canister flying into the assailants with a will. It had the effect of magic, making such havoc that the enemy fled in terror—all save the leader, a man of noble appearance, who, unaware of the faltering of his troops, advanced, brandishing his sword, his long hair streaming behind him, a shining mark for death to lay low. Upon this all hands were called to the scene, the guns were worked with grape and canister, and the marines, protected by the hammocks, watched the tree-tops for a puff of smoke, and picked off the sharpshooters, who fell every moment through the breaking branches with wild cries. After that nothing was left but retreat, and there followed half a day of furious assault and repulse, of fighting for every point, in order to send the lines ashore there, and so to round the curves of the river; of struggling on the enemy's part to keep the ships in the toils, of barricades at every bend, of rifle-pits on every bluff. Of course the ship that had been in the rear of the advance now led the retreat, and received the concealed fire of a thousand infantry at every exposed spot, while the *Commodore Perry*, bringing up the rear at some distance behind, was in almost every instance unexpected by the rebels, and coming on their flank, threw into them such volleys of grape and shrapnel that those on board could distinctly see the bloody havoc that they wrought. At length, completely exhausted, the three brave vessels were in open water once more, decks wet with blood and heaped with dead and wounded, and sides fairly riddled with bullets. It was probably owing to the report of this affair, in which Lieutenant Cushing was highly complimented, that he was ordered to his first command, the gun-boat *Ellis*, a craft of a hundred tons, mounting two guns, and drawing so little water that, in Western parlance, she could float on a heavy dew; and in her the young officer, aged nineteen, resolved upon noble achievements.

After capturing the town of Swansborough, taking and being obliged to burn the *Adelaide*, with a cargo worth a hundred thousand dollars, and destroying many important salt-works, Lieutenant Cushing made a dash for the county seat of Onslow Court House, about twenty miles from the mouth of New River, where the wide and

deep waters afforded an excellent harbor for Nassau vessels. The following is his official report of the affair to his senior officer, and his demand for an investigation, which was denied him, because, as Mr. Fox said, "We don't care for the loss of a vessel when fought so gallantly as that."

"U. S. S. 'HETZEL,' November 26, 1862.

"SIR,—I have the honor to report that I entered New River Inlet on the 23d of this month, with the United States steamer *Ellis* under my command, succeeded in passing the narrow and shallow place called the Rocks, and started up the river. My object was to sweep the river, capture any vessels there, capture the town of Jacksonville, or Onslow Court House, take the Wilmington mail, and destroy any salt-works that I might find on the banks. I expected to surprise the enemy in going up, and then to fight my way out. Five miles from the mouth I came in sight of a vessel bound outward, with a load of cotton and turpentine. The enemy fired her to prevent her falling into our hands. I ran alongside, made sure that they could not extinguish the flames, and again steamed up the river. At 1 P.M. I reached the town of Jacksonville, landed, threw out my pickets, and placed guards over the public buildings. This place is the county seat of Onslow County, and quite an important town. It is situated on the right bank of the river going up, and is thirty-five or forty miles from the mouth. I captured twenty-five stand of public arms in the courthouse and post-office, quite a large mail, and two schooners. I also confiscated the negroes of the Confederate postmaster. I forgot to mention that the town is situated upon the main turnpike-road from Wilmington. Several rebel officers escaped as I neared the town, and carried the news to that city.

"At 2.30 P.M. I started down the river, and at 5 P.M. came in sight of a camp on the bank, which I thoroughly shelled. At the point where the schooner captured in the morning was still burning the enemy opened fire on the *Ellis* with rifles, but were soon silenced by our guns. I had two pilots on board, both of whom informed me that it would be impossible to take the steamer from the river that night. High water and daylight were two things absolutely essential in order to take her out. I therefore came to anchor about five miles from the outer bar, took my prizes alongside, and made every preparation to repel an attack. All night long the signal-fires of the enemy could be seen upon the banks. At daylight I got under way, and had nearly reached the worst place in the channel, when the enemy opened on us with two pieces of artillery. I placed the vessel in position, at once hoisted the battle-flag at the fore, the crew gave it three cheers, and we went into action. In one hour we had driven the enemy from his guns and from the bluff, and passed within a hundred yards of their position without receiving fire. Up to this time I had been in every way successful, but was here destined to meet with an accident that changed the fortunes of the day, and resulted in the destruction of my vessel. About five hundred yards from the bluffs, the pilots, mistaking the channel, ran the *Ellis* hard and fast aground. All hands went to work at once to lighten her, and anchors and steam were used to get her afloat, but without success. The headway of the steamer had forced her over a shoal, and into a position where, as the centre of a circle, we had a circumference of shoal all around. When the tide fell I sent a party ashore to take possession of the artillery abandoned in the morning, but when they reached the field it was discovered that it had been removed while we were at work upon the vessel. If I had secured this, I proposed to construct a shore battery to assist in the defense of my vessel by keeping the rebels from placing their battery in position. At dark I took one of my prize schooners alongside, and proceeded to take every thing out of the *Ellis* excepting the pivot-gun, some ammunition, two tons of coal, and a few small-arms. Steam and anchor again failed to get my vessel afloat. I felt confident that the Con-

federates would come on me in overwhelming force, and it now became my duty to save my men. So all hands were called to muster, and the crew told that they could go aboard the schooner. I called for six volunteers to remain with me on board and fight the remaining gun. Knowing that it was almost certain death,* the men came forward, and two master's mates, Valentine and Barton, were among the number. These gentlemen subsequently behaved with coolness and bravery. I ordered the schooner to drop down the channel out of range from the bluffs, and there to wait for the termination of the impending engagement, and if we were destroyed, to proceed to sea. Early in the morning the enemy opened upon us from four points with heavy rifled guns (one a Whitworth). It was a cross-fire, and very destructive. I replied as best I could, but in a short time the engine was disabled, and she was much cut up in every part, and the only alternatives left were surrender or a pull of one and a half miles under their fire in my small boat. The first of these was not, of course, to be thought of; the second I resolved to attempt. I fired the *Ellis* in five places, and having seen that the battle-flag was still flying, trained the gun upon the enemy, so that the vessel might fight herself after we had left, and started down the river, reached the schooner, and made sail for sea. It was low water on the bar, and a heavy surf was rolling in, but the wind forced us through after striking several times. We were just in time, for about six hundred yards down the beach were several companies of calvary trying to reach the mouth of the inlet in time to cut us off. We hoisted our flag, gave three cheers, and were off. In four hours I reached Beaufort. I brought away all my men, my rifled howitzer and ammunition, the ship's stores and clothing, the men's bags and hammocks, and a portion of the small-arms. I retained on board the *Ellis* a few muskets, pikes, and pistols to repel boarders. I neglected to state that when I took possession of the enemy's ground on the 24th a salt-work was destroyed, and ten boats rendered useless that were to have been used for boarding.

"At 9 A.M. the United States steamer *Ellis* was blown in pieces by the explosion of the magazine. Officers and men behaved nobly, obeying orders strictly under the most trying circumstances.

"I respectfully request that a court of inquiry may be ordered to investigate the facts of the case, and to see if the honor of the flag has suffered in my hands."

This report was indorsed in commendatory terms by the senior officer to whom it was addressed, and was further indorsed by Admiral Lee with the expression of his "admiration for Lieutenant Cushing's coolness, courage, and conduct."

Shortly after this affair, there being need of pilots for the harbor of Wilmington, upon which place an attack was meditated, Lieutenant Cushing undertook to make prisoners of some; and in the course of his adventure, at night, a couple of miles up a narrow shadowy stream, he was suddenly saluted by a volley of musketry. Without losing a moment he turned his boats to shore, and crying to his men to follow him—there were but twenty in all—he had them, yelling and shouting, up a bluff and charging an earth-work, over ditch and parapet, and, through the might of sheer boldness, driving the garrison from the fort with so firm a conviction that they were surprised by a much superior body that arms and valua-

bles, and even supper, were left at the mercy of the conquerors, who, enjoying the supper, and possessing themselves of every thing portable, soon destroyed the earth-work and returned to the little prize schooner in which they had disguised their approach, and which was already rolling in the heavy swell of an advancing storm. Inside of the angle made with the coast by Cape Fear and Frying-pan Shoals, which jut out into the Atlantic for some thirty miles, and where every southwest gale heaps up the sea in a fearful manner, in a vessel of forty tons, with one anchor, a few fathoms of chain, and a lee shore alive with an angry and alert enemy—this is a situation certainly not to be coveted; and though the *Hope* ran under close-reefed canvas, it soon became apparent that, making as much leeway as headway, there was no possibility of her weathering the shoals at all. Meanwhile a tempest of rain abated in some degree the great height and power of the waves, but it was accompanied by a dense fog that in-folded the little schooner like a fleece, and shut her off from all the world of raging waters round them. At this juncture one of two things must at once be decided upon—either to go ashore and surrender vessel and crew as prisoners of war, or to put boldly out across the thirty miles of stormy space between the shore and the shoals, and, allowing for all the leeway made, endeavor to strike the mere vein of a channel that was known to streak them like a hair. Of course Lieutenant Cushing chose the latter, although, in such a gale, he was aware that the breakers must be very high even in that narrow channel. It was, in fact, a magnificent game of chance, for should they veer to the right or the left the distance of a dozen rods, not one plank of the schooner would be left upon another. Accordingly he fixed his course, placed Mr. Valentine—the same master's mate who acted so gallantly at the loss of the *Ellis*—at the helm, and told him alone of the danger.

"All at once," says Lieutenant Cushing, in relating the affair, "I saw the old quartermaster at the lead turn deathly pale as he sang out, 'Breakers ahead! For God's sake, Sir, go about!' In an instant the cry was, 'Breakers on the lee bow!' then, 'Breakers on the weather bow!' and we were into them. All seemed over now; but we stood at the helm, determined to control our boat to the last. A shock—she had struck. But it was only for a second, and she still fairly flew through the great white breakers. Again and again she struck, but never hard. She had found the channel, and in twenty minutes we were safe, and scudding for Beaufort."

Lieutenant Cushing now took command of a steamer mounting five 100-pounders smooth-bore guns, one 100-pounder Parrott rifle, and

* The magazine, as Lieutenant Cushing does not mention in his report, being entirely exposed.

a 12-pound howitzer, with a crew of one hundred and fifty men—preferring this command in Hampton Roads, with a good prospect of engagement, to that of the fast blockader *Violet* and a prospect of many rich prizes. And fighting being what he wanted, he had, one might suppose, a plenty of it, being engaged continuously for three weeks, and never once defeated: taking earth-works and bringing off the guns; pulling in his gig from ship to ship under the muzzles of the enemy's guns in full blast; taking, with ninety sailors and a howitzer, the town of Chuckatuck four hours after it had been occupied by Longstreet's left wing; making important reconnaissances, constantly exposed to danger—bullets grazing his skin, and one shearing a lock of hair from his head close to the crown—but never meeting with any injury. At the close of this duty he received a letter of congratulation and thanks from the Secretary of the Navy, and being ordered into dock for repairs, he was sent for by the President, who complimented him with enthusiasm in an hour's interview.

After being put in condition again Lieutenant Cushing's ship proceeded on an expedition up the York River, in which Brigadier-General Lee, the son of General Robert E. Lee, was made prisoner; and before long he was ordered to the defense of the capital, which the advance of the rebels had endangered. It was while he was stationed at Washington that the battle of Gettysburg took place, where his brother fell fighting in command of a battery of the Fourth United States Artillery, and Lieutenant Cushing at once proceeded to the field with the double purpose of procuring his brother's remains and of working his guns, if permitted to do so; but the army had already moved on, leaving its terrible débris of horses and cannon and caissons, of countless wounded men and unburied dead, beneath the burning sky. "As I write this," says Lieutenant Cushing, some years later—"as I write this, rocked on the long swell of the Pacific, under the warmth of an equatorial sun, my mind goes back in review of the many sad scenes in those bloody years of rebellion, but fails to bring up any picture that is so grand, or solemn, or mournful as that great theatre of death."

In the following August—that of 1863—the lieutenant went on board the *Shoboken*, which was a ferry-boat with the hull built out, fitted for work in all manner of shallow creeks, but eminently unseaworthy. In her he destroyed the blockade-runner *Hebe*, after a contest with a rebel battery; and being refused permission to do as much for another vessel in New Topsail Inlet, soon undertook the task without permission. Anchoring the *Shoboken* near the land late in the afternoon, he led the enemy to suppose that an expedi-

tion in boats was intended six miles up the river to the wharf where the prize lay; and accordingly one gun was detached from the rebel battery of six at the mouth of the inlet, carried up to the wharf, and pointed so as to command the deck of the prize, in case the remaining guns had not already annihilated the party attempting entrance; and a watch having been set, things seemed as safe as strength and vigilance could make them. But the rebels had a foe to deal with of whose strategic powers they made no calculation, and it did not enter their heads to observe that the *Shoboken* was anchored four miles up the beach, and to draw any inference from such anchorage. So, with the night, taking ashore two boats' crews in a single boat, the lieutenant had them shoulder the dingy and carry it across the narrow neck of land, and launch it on the other side, four miles inside the inlet, and entirely out of range of the battery at the mouth. A night surprise is apt to be a successful thing, for it has to aid it all the doubt and magnitude and awe of the night, which increases the attacking force to infinity, and bewilders the judgment of the assailed with darkness; but even with knowledge of this the rebels might have been amazed if they had ever learned that they were surprised, charged, and routed in the night by six sailors, their artillery and ten prisoners captured, the vessel burned, and some valuable salt-works destroyed, two sailors acting as pickets, two guarding the prisoners, and two, assisted by the ever-ready plantation hands, burning the vessel and buildings. Of course the ten prisoners would have been entirely too much for the six men if they had only known there were but six, but three of them being stowed in the dingy, while a great amount of ordering and answering passed between supposititious boats on the stream, the remainder were directed to go some furlongs up the bank and report to an officer there, and not to go too far out unless they wished to be shot by the pickets of their captors; and that being done, the lieutenant and his party glided away in the darkness and regained the *Shoboken* in safety.

But not to rest. It was only from one thing to another with this daring spirit. Finding the next day, on regaining the squadron, that it was engaged with a battery on the shore, he threw himself with twenty men into boats, assaulted the battery, and took two rifled guns, which he got aboard his ship; and immediately afterward, no other enemy being at hand, entered into a tussle with a northeast gale, which so nearly had the better of him that when he came in sight of the fleet again he learned that all had supposed him at the bottom of the sea; but he had, in truth, a curious way of always coming to the surface again,

and of frequently being taken for his own ghost, as was evident, indeed, on the night succeeding the destruction of the *Albemarle*. Immediately after this gale he was detached from the *Shoboken* and ordered to the *Monticello*, the command being given him, said Mr. Fox, "for distinguished services rendered," and it is not a little amusing to find him, hot-headed as ever, while on shore awaiting his outfit, administering summary chastisement to some men who had dared to speak disrespectfully of his uniform.

In the winter of 1862 he was again blockading off the Carolina coast. This service must have been on many accounts an interesting one—the ships by day lying at their anchorage out of the enemy's range, by night drawing together in one long line across the bar in order that none of the leaden hulls of the runners, so skillfully mingling with the tints of mist and twilight, might elude them, and always on guard against shoal and reef and the coming out of the moon to show them "close under a hundred rebel cannon," pointed at different altitudes, so that one might do what another failed to do. There were also cruisers stationed farther out, whose duty it was to determine what ought to be the whereabouts of the richly laden escaping steamers, taking into account the probable time of escape, moon and tide and speed, a look-out being always aloft to give the cry, and start the chase that would presently overhaul a million dollars for prize. Such work, however, was not adventurous enough for Lieutenant Cushing's fancy, and he determined to celebrate Washington's birthday in a more exciting manner, and by taking and holding Smith's Island, close to the enemy, one of the outlets of Cape Fear River, which would have been an event of great importance. Failing to obtain permission, through his senior officer's fear of assuming responsibility, although the undertaking proceeded on the assumption of such complete security in the strength of their position on the part of the enemy that every precaution which could stand in the way of a surprise was most probably omitted, and indignant with what seemed to him a lack of dash and spirit where it could be of any service, the young man at once proceeded to act for himself, and we have never heard of any instance since the days of windy Troy to compare with that night's adventure; for as he was not allowed the means to carry out his original proposition, Lieutenant Cushing had gravely assured his senior that in order to prove to him how completely feasible it was, he would have the honor of bringing off the Confederate commanding officer to breakfast with him in the morning. All lovers of heroism will remember the passage of the *Iliad* where Ulysses and Diomed leave the circle of old kings sitting around the field fire in the dead of the night, and exploring the hostile camps,

take the spy Dolon and destroy Rhesus in his tent, and bring off the

"steeds
More white than snow, huge and well shaped, whose
fiery pace exceeds
The winds in swiftness."

It was quite as daring a thing which Lieutenant Cushing now proposed to do.

He had already on a reconnaissance found that the rebel confidence was so great that when grazing the very face of the forts he had received no challenge, and therefore on this night he took twenty men, entered the Cape Fear River, and pulled directly up to Smithville, the rebel head-quarters, landing before the hotel, perhaps twenty-five yards from the fort, and hiding his men on the shore. Obtaining from a negro at a salt-work on the bank the requisite information, with two of his officers he crept at midnight, when not a sound disturbed the air, up the principal street to the commanding general's residence, a large house, with verandas, opposite the barracks, where, about fifteen yards off, lay twelve hundred men without a dream of danger. There had been a gay gathering, apparently, in the house that evening, and delaying till after the guests had gone and the occupants might be supposed to sleep, Lieutenant Cushing noiselessly tried the unbolted door, entered the hall, glanced into a mess-room, and then ascended the stairs. But at the moment of softly opening the door of a sleeping-room he heard a crash and the whispered call of his officer below, and quickly springing to answer it, he found that his other companion, whom he had left on the veranda, had, in a sublime confidence that the place was already taken, gone strutting up and down, awaking the Confederate adjutant-general, who, throwing up a window, found himself suddenly looking into the muzzle of a navy revolver, upon which the sash had been dropped with a clang, and the adjutant, escaping through a back-door, had made for the brush. In an instant the lieutenant was in the room, had struck a wax match, had floored the remaining occupant, the chief engineer of the forces there, and with his pistol at the head of the man, still half dazed with sleep, threatening to blow out his brains if he spoke, had made him put on some clothes, had learned from him that the commanding general had gone that day to Wilmington, had possessed himself of the adjutant-general's papers and plans, and was in his boat again and in the middle of the stream before the outraged rebels had gained their senses, or had begun to swarm out and fill the air with cries and calls; and while the signal-lights were flashing to the forts below, and the long roll calling to arms, he was pulling quietly aboard his ship, and carrying the chief engineer of the enemy, snatched from the very teeth of that enemy,

to breakfast with his commander—if not exactly what he had promised, at least the next best thing. There being occasion on the following day to send in a flag of truce, a note was dispatched by it, of which a copy is given below:

"MY DEAR GENERAL,—I deeply regret that you were not at home when I called. I inclose my card.

"Very respectfully, W. B. CUSHING."

Of course, after the first burst of indignation, the matter was taken very good-naturedly by the offended party, but this note was declared to be the very climax of impudence, and Lieutenant Cushing was given very distinctly to understand that his experiment could not be repeated—a gage which he had no opportunity to take up until the following June.

Having been undergoing repairs at Norfolk, in June Lieutenant Cushing returned to Beaufort, his coaling station, and there learned that a rebel iron-clad, the *Raleigh*, had been defying the fleet after wanton fashion, and, conscious of her strength, had not only convoyed blockade-runners through the intimidated squadron, but had remained out of harbor for several hours, only returning at her leisure after daybreak. Of course the younger officers of the navy were burning with resentment, and Lieutenant Cushing, in the *Monticello*, accompanied by the *Vicksburg*, immediately started in pursuit, though unsuccessfully, as she had taken harbor; and it was not until a letter came from Admiral Lee himself that Lieutenant Cushing was allowed the men and boats that he desired to go upon an expedition inside the bar, and to avenge the insult the navy had received by boarding and taking possession of the *Raleigh* where she lay. After dark, then, one night late in June, with fifteen men and two officers—Mr. Howorth and Mr. Martin—he slipped into the harbor, passing Forts Caswell and Holmes and the other batteries, and pulled up the river with muffled oars, just escaping being run down by a tug, and passing the town of Smithville—the scene of his capture of the chief engineer—in safety. His object was to determine the whereabouts of the *Raleigh*, and then to return and bring back a hundred men to board her. The *Raleigh*, however, was not to be seen any where either inside the bar or at quarantine, and he accordingly pursued his course up stream, although a strong current made it best for him to hazard pulling on the side where the moon lay. Just as the boat reached Fort Anderson, there came a sentry's hail, followed by the shouting of a dozen other voices and a quick volley of musketry. Immediately the lieutenant put the boat about and pointed her head down stream, and giving the helm a turn so as to present the least possible surface to the moon's rays, he cut across into the shadow

of the other bank, where he once more made his way up the river, leaving the enemy to pursue an imaginary foe in the opposite direction.

When within four miles of the city, it being nearly daylight, the crew went ashore, and drawing the boat by means of their united strength into a patch of swamp, they masked her with branches of trees, and disposed of themselves in the growth along the bank. Here during the long summer's day they saw several steamers going unsuspectingly up and down the river, with the rebel commodore's flag-ship and many smaller craft, but there was no sign of the iron-clad to be seen. At twilight, however, fancying that an approaching party of fishermen in a couple of boats was a discovery and an attack, Lieutenant Cushing stepped from his hiding-place, hailed them, and boldly ordered them to surrender, which the gentle creatures did upon the spot. From these prisoners he ascertained that there was very good reason for his not finding the *Raleigh* at her anchorage, nature having taken the matter quite out of the lieutenant's hands; for having run upon a sand-bar some time previously, the iron-clad, with the falling of the tide, had broken in two by her own weight, and was now an utter wreck. Being satisfied that this was really the case, Lieutenant Cushing resolved, before returning, to obtain all the information possible concerning the batteries and obstructions of the place, knowing that a movement upon it was already in contemplation. Having mastered all the facts of the forts and channels, he at last stationed himself with eight men at a junction of the main turnpike with two other roads, hardly two miles from the city and all its swarms of soldiery and lines of fortifications. The first thing done was to capture the army mail-carrier, with his mail of between four and five hundred letters, among which were those containing plans of the rebel defenses, and other important documents; and the adventurers being by this time rather hungry, and having taken prisoner a wandering store-keeper, Mr. Howorth put on the coat and cap of the mail-carrier, mounted his horse, and started for the town to procure provisions, his pocket being well lined with the Confederate money taken from the mail; and he presently returned from his dangerous errand—one on which detection would have twisted a rope round his neck, with a very short shrift—bringing in good refreshments, and having mingled freely with the enemy, for whom he had been obliged to exert his inventive faculties after a manner that would have done justice to the best romancer living. In the mean time the lieutenant and his men had not been idle, and they were now guarding twenty-six prisoners under the most excellent discipline, since

a shout from any one of them would have brought an army about their ears; and he was now only waiting for the evening courier with the Richmond mail before rejoining the remainder of his party and putting off for sea. He decided, however, to send his prisoners to the boat, and it was just as they were crossing the road that the mail-carrier came in sight, accompanied by a Confederate officer, who, drawing a swift conclusion, turned about to flee. Being mounted on the horse of one of the prisoners, the lieutenant instantly gave chase, but to no purpose, as his horse was neither of the best nor freshest; and thereupon, cutting the telegraph wires in two places, he hastened to his boat, which now lay moored in a little creek, put the prisoners into the canoes which had been picked up, and dropped down toward the river, which was reached exactly as the shadows of night darkened it pleasantly. It had been the lieutenant's intention to leave the greater part of his prisoners on the light-house island in the river, having captured them merely for the sake of securing their silence; but just as he was putting in under the bank for that purpose the steamer *Virginia* came puffing close upon him. In a breath the order was given for every man to jump overboard and push the boats into the marsh grass, and the prisoners were promised instant death upon the first sign; and while every head was held under the gunwale for a moment, the steamer plowed by without suspicion. Having eluded this danger, Lieutenant Cushing now removed the oars and sails from the canoes, and set twenty of his prisoners adrift in the tide-way, knowing they would knock about safely there till morning, when they would be seen and cared for from shore; and attaching to a buoy, where it could not fail to be seen and taken off, a note, in which he happily recalled to the memory of the authorities their declaration that he would not again enter their harbor, he made all haste for sea, intending to pass through the upper outlet, and having Forts Anderson and Fisher to pass, together with the island and outer batteries. It was a little below Fort Anderson that, encountering a boat-load of soldiers, he captured them without ado, and learned that a guard-boat containing seventy-five men awaited him on the bar. This was not unexpected; and the fresh prisoners having been menaced with assurance of their due deserts if they attempted aid or comfort to the enemy at the critical time, it was resolved by the lieutenant and his officers to pull for the bar, the tide setting down strongly, lay themselves alongside the guard-boat in the bright moonlight, and, while engaging the men there with cutlasses and revolvers, drift with them by the batteries, which, since they could not destroy them without firing on their own men, would be likely to let

them pass. It was no great while before glimpses were caught of a boat rocking on the tide below them, and they eagerly made for it, quite confident of their ability to occupy many times their own number of land-lubbers until they should be out of range of the batteries, when it would be just as easy to leave their foe behind. But when still some yards distant from the boat, and just preparing to open a broadside upon it, suddenly four other boats darted out from behind a neighboring point, and five from the opposite island, and formed a line across the bar, completely entrapping the lieutenant and his men, while at the same time, going short round, a large sail-boat was discovered to windward. Misfortune could hardly have seemed more imminent and absolute, and if any thing could be done it must be done on the instant. The river, as it chanced, divided at that point round an island, making two channels, one that up which they had passed on the preceding night from Fort Caswell, now lying seven miles below, and which it would have been madness to try, since it would have brought them opposite Smithville and the forts by broad daylight, even if the southwest gale had not been blowing there, and making breakers in which the boat would have been crushed like a bubble. Of course, then, their only hope was to circumvent the enemy, so that the other and shorter channel might be gained, at whose entrance no such dangerous sea was to be encountered. Quickly giving the word to his men, the lieutenant darted off with his boat as if for Smithville, passing the large sail-boat; then suddenly sheering, so as to escape the full moonlight (as in going by Fort Anderson the night before), he was for one moment invisible in the swell, and the whole ten boats were after him on the way to Smithville—boats manned by soldiers instead of sailors, who were, therefore, totally unaware of the impossibility of exit by that channel. Seizing the opportunity, the lieutenant boldly turned about, and when he came in sight again was making for the sail-boat as if he intended to board her. Of course the crew of the sail-boat, unused to such contests, hesitated, and started to tack, but missed stays, and drifted away on the tide before they could recover themselves, while the crew of the lieutenant's boat, bending all their strength to the oars, darted round in a broad curve astern the line of boats, and were in the desired channel, a hundred yards in advance of all the rest, before their object was fairly understood; and heading for the breakers on Carolina Shoals, lest on another course the batteries should blow them to atoms—breakers which the boats rowed by soldiers could not dare dream of attempting—they took the great waves safely, and were presently past all pursuit. The results of this expedition

were so important, and the conduct of it so remarkable, that we are not surprised to find its leader again receiving the formal thanks of the Navy Department. Indeed, these official congratulations became apparently quite a matter of course; and in the following October he was earning them again, together not only with the engrossed thanks of the Congress of the United States, and addresses from chambers of commerce, boards of trade, municipalities, and clubs without number, but with the more substantial reward of a promotion to the grade of lieutenant-commander, at the age of twenty-one, all in recognition of his destruction of the rebel ram *Albemarle*, an iron-clad of the same model as the *Merrimac*, which had done great damage, and met the fire of hundred-pounder Dahlgrens and Parrotts at ten yards range without injury.

Directly upon his promotion the young hero took command of the flag-ship *Malvern*, bearing the broad pennant of the rear-admiral, and in December was part of the force operating against Fort Fisher. Here Commander Cushing performed what, with the exception of the *Albemarle* affair, was in reality the most dangerous exploit in all his term of service, and one requiring a more steady courage, being nothing less than the buoying of a channel in an open skiff—a skiff rivaling the famous little boat of the battle of Lake Erie—in the midst of a shower of round shot, shell, and shrapnel, the work continuing for six hours, the skiff frequently half filled with water by the plunging shot, and its companion being sunk.

During the brief cessation of more active operations against the Wilmington forts, Commander Cushing offered battle to the *Chickamauga*, a rebel privateer carrying an extra crew; but the challenge being declined, he drove a large blockade-runner ashore under her nose, and returned to the fleet, which on the 12th of January resumed the attack upon the forts, the ships being sixty in number, comprising iron-clads, frigates, sloops of war, and gun-boats. An assault being ordered after a three days' bombardment, Commander Cushing, with other officers, accompanied the force of sailors and marines about to storm the sea front of Fort Fisher. Marching to within a few hundred yards of the embrasures, the entire body threw themselves down under the slope of the beach, waiting for the signal of attack, the whole fire of the navy passing with a deafening noise just over their heads. Springing to their feet at the word of command, they moved forward steadily over the soft white sand, which the sunshine made dazzling, and the relief of which rendered every officer in his uniform of blue and gold-lace—and, indeed, every man—a conspicuous target, the rebels meanwhile pouring forth an unceasing fire that cut down their foes in windrows.

Finding himself alone at last, just after reaching the palisades, Commander Cushing turned to rally his men, and was obliged to cross a hundred yards of the bare sand with the bullets pattering about him in such wise that it seems as if he must have borne a charmed life. Most of the ranking officers were either dead or badly wounded by that time, or else remaining under shelter of the palisades till night-fall—more fortunate than their comrades, who, dropping on the beach, were swept out to sea by the rising and falling tide—he therefore assumed the command himself, and gathering some hundreds of men with great effort, he was again proceeding to the assault, when requested to relieve with them a regiment which went to the assistance of the army on the other side, which was operating to such effect under the gallant General Ames that before midnight the works had surrendered.

The first important action of Commander Cushing after the surrender was the seizure of the pilots who had so many times safely steered the blockade-runners into port; and when his preparations to hang them had thoroughly frightened them into obedience, he agreed to spare their lives on condition of their erecting the customary signal-lights on Oak Island by which the blockade-running steamers came in and out. Accordingly, some four or five days after the capture of the forts, the large blockade-running steamer *Charlotte*, trusting to the lights, came over the bar and made her private signals to Fort Caswell, and being hailed and told that the signal corps had been withdrawn to Smithville, came confidently up to her anchorage. She was commanded by a British ex-naval officer, and she carried among her other passengers two officers of the British army coming over to see the Confederate sport, and the owners of her costly cargo of arms and munitions—all of whom, in great glee at the successful termination of their hazardous enterprise, had just sat down to a sumptuous banquet, and were toasting their safe arrival in Champagne. Suddenly the door opened, a light form stepped in, a hand was laid upon the captain's chair, and every one looked up in amazement to meet the gaze of those dauntless eagle eyes of Commander Cushing, which no one who has once seen him is likely to forget. "Gentlemen," said he, "you are my prisoners. Allow me the pleasure of joining in your toast. Steward, another bottle of Champagne!" Of course there was nothing but submission, for his men were already disposed about the deck, and the *Charlotte* was his prize. There was a moment or two of sullen silence on the part of the discomfited passengers; then one of the British officers looked at his *vis-à-vis*, and exclaimed, in noble rage, "I say—beastly luck!" To which his comrade pres-

ently replied, in a voice proceeding from the depths of his disgust, "Unmitigated sell!" After which disembarassment a better feeling prevailed, and the banquet was proceeding as gayly as the circumstances allowed, when Commander Cushing was summoned on deck with the announcement that another steamer, the *Stag*, was coming up the river, upon which he bade adieu to the festive scene, and proceeded to make prize of the second steamer.

It would be easy to go on enumerating the days of this young officer by his valiant deeds; to tell of the capture of small towns, of great store-houses of cotton, corn, and bacon; of his examining the obstructions before Fort Anderson, and going so close in that one night, exasperated by the speech-making and carousal there, he sent a bullet whistling through the astonished merry-makers, and in consequence very nearly robbed the navy of one of its brightest ornaments by the storm of grape that instantly scattered the water about him; of his constructing a mock-mouirer out of an old flat-boat and some painted canvas, and sending her past the fort on the night tide, so that the commandant, knowing the army to be in his rear, and seeing the gun-boats gaining the stream above, abandoned his fortifications without spiking the guns. But an account has not yet been given of the greatest of his achievements, and it is perhaps enough to close with the story of his destruction of the *Albemarle*—a more daring and spirited act than we can call to mind out of the records of any navy.

The *Albemarle*, as it has been mentioned, was an iron-clad of tremendous strength, which had already defeated the whole Federal fleet, sunk the *Southfield*, exploded the boiler of the *Sassacus*, engaged nine foes at once without danger to herself, forced the surrender of a brigade, and the abandonment of the whole region of the Roanoke by the Federal forces. The government having no iron-clads capable of crossing Hatteras bar and encountering her, all its operations in that section were rendered practically useless by the *Albemarle's* presence there, and the expense of the squadron necessary to keep watch upon her movements was something enormous. In this emergency Lieutenant Cushing submitted two plans to Admiral Lee for the ram's destruction. The admiral approved of one of them, and sent its projector to Washington to lay it before the Secretary of the Navy, and the latter, though at first a little doubtful of its merit, finally authorized him to procure the means to carry it into execution; and he immediately purchased in New York two open launches, each about thirty feet long, fitted with a small engine and propelled by a screw, carrying a howitzer, and provided with a long boom that swung by a hinge, which could be raised or

lowered at will, and which had a torpedo in the groove at its further extremity. These boats were taken down through the canals to the Chesapeake, one of them being lost on the way, and the other reaching the sounds at last through cuts and creeks and an infinitude of toils, hinderances, and ruses. Joining the fleet, which lay at the mouth of the river, the lieutenant disclosed his object to his men, assuring them that they not only must not expect, but they must not hope, to return, for death was almost inevitable, and then called for volunteers. They all stood by him, and six others presently joined them, Assistant-Paymaster Frank Swan and Mr. Howorth, who had often accompanied him on his most reckless adventures, being of the number. The *Albemarle* lay moored at the Plymouth wharf, eight miles up the river, both banks of which were lined with batteries, and held by several thousand soldiers, while, at some distance up, that portion of the wreck of the *Southfield* which still lay above water was occupied by a picket-guard, whose duty it was to throw up rockets on the first alarm, for, unknown to the attacking party, rumor of the intended endeavor had in some mysterious way already reached the Plymouth authorities, and every provision had been made for their reception. However, on the night of the 27th of October, the little launch entered the Roanoke River, her engine at low pressure, to make the least noise possible, left behind all obstructions, passed within thirty feet of the unsuspecting picket on the *Southfield*, and approached the wharf where the ram lay, a vast black mass in the darkness. Greatly emboldened by this success, the lieutenant for a moment resolved to change his plan, and, knowing the town perfectly, to put in shore and trust to the effect of a night surprise, with which he was so well acquainted, overpower those on board, get her into the stream before the forts could be aroused, and fight the batteries with her on her way down. But just as he was about to carry his sudden plan into execution, a cry from the ram rang out sharply on the night, repeated on every side, followed by the instantaneous booming of the great guns from ship and shore; and returning no answer, the lieutenant put on all steam and made for her. At the same moment an immense bonfire of pine-knots and turpentine blazed up on the bank, most fortunately for him, since it revealed directly the untoward fact that a boom of logs extended around the ram in all directions to guard her from torpedoes, which for one second seemed an insurmountable obstacle. Only for one second, though. With the next the lieutenant had given orders to sheer off across the stream, so as to get room for acquiring headway and carrying his launch by the force of its own impetus straight across the boom, though it never could get out again,

he knew. As they turned, a volley of buck-shot tore away the whole back of his coat and the sole of his shoe, and the man by his side fell lifeless. Before the volley could be repeated the launch had struck the boom, was over, and was forging up under the *Albemarle's* quarter, directly beneath the mouth of a rifle-gun, and so close that the merest whisper on board the ram, where they were endeavoring to bring the gun to bear, could be distinctly heard.

That must have been a terrifically exciting moment to those on that little launch, with the vast mountain of iron towering above them, the fire-lit mass of foes upon the shore, and triumph and eternity in the next moment. Lieutenant Cushing stood at the bows of the launch, with several lines before him: one of these lines was attached to the howitzer, one to the ankle of the engineer, one to the officer who was to lower the boom carrying the torpedo, one was that by means of which the torpedo was to be slid under the ram, another was the exploding-line, which should pull away a pin and let a grape-shot drop on the percussion-cap beneath. The howitzer had already been discharged. The line attached to the engineer was pulled: the engine stopped. The boom was lowered, the torpedo slid slowly off and under, the air-chamber at top bringing it up in position beneath the ram. The last line was pulled, the grape-shot fell, just as the rifle-gun went off—and the rebel ram and the launch blew up together, and columns of water shot up and fell again, heavy with dead and dying. But just as Lieutenant Cushing pulled the exploding line he had cried out to his men to save themselves, and throwing off arms and heavy garments, had struck out into the water. The surface was being ripped up with shot, boats were already out picking up the wounded, and dying men were going down with gurgling groans around him; but he boldly made for the other bank, and was just reaching it, when he heard the voice of one of his own men in a sinking state, and turned to relieve, if possible, one who had shared such peril with him. Finding the man, he supported him with one arm and kept him afloat for several minutes, when all at once he went down, leaving the lieutenant alone on the water, swimming with faint strokes, with what seemed interminable distances before him, but so firmly resolved to escape that, perhaps, after voluntary power was expended, the muscular motion still continued mechanically, and carried him at last to shore, where he fell, with his feet still in the water, and lay, not more than half conscious, till morning, when the bright, invigorating sunshine showed him that he had gained a piece of swamp not far from one of the forts, and from whence he could see the angry and excited town, with a curious sense of power

in the midst of all his weakness. The sentinel, meanwhile, was walking his round on the parapet, and in order to make any shelter it was necessary to rise and run for it the moment his back was turned. Doing so, he was obliged, at the instant the sentinel turned about again, to drop where he was, between two paths of the tall grass, which partially sheltered him, since, being covered with mud from head to foot, he was hardly distinguishable from the soil, as he presently found when a party of men came down one of the paths and passed so near him as almost to tread on his arm without discovering him. Knowing it would be impossible to remain there safely for any length of time, he lay on his back, planted his elbow and his heel firmly in the ground, and thus hitched himself slowly along till he gained the cypress swamp, a mass of bog and brier, through which, barefooted, bare-headed, and bare-handed, he had to force a path till the blood flowed from his innumerable wounds and bruises. Entering at last a clearing, a fresh danger appeared, in the shape of a group of soldiers, behind whom he had to pass at a distance of twenty yards, creeping through a corn furrow. He was now in the outskirts of a wood, and encountering an old negro, he gave him a piece of money which had chanced to remain about him, and sent him back to town to bring him news of what had happened there overnight; for he wished to be sure that he had done the work there thoroughly before making any more effort to get back to his ship; and famished, exhausted, and with every nerve strung to its utmost tension, it seemed to him that if he had failed he did not care to get back at all. Vibrating, in his suspense, between a fear that the man might betray him and a confidence that he would not, he rested there till the messenger came back, bringing him news of the complete destruction of the rebel ram, and he plunged gayly into another swamp, so dense that he could only direct himself by the sun, emerging from its tall reeds and brambles, a couple of hours past noon, upon one of the deep and narrow creeks that wind in and out through all those regions, exactly opposite a fresh detachment of soldiers on the other bank, and who, as fate willed it, had a little skiff made of four or five rough boards, with the seams pitched with tar, "toggled to the root of an old cypress-tree that squirmed like a snake into the inky water," as he described it. Lying in wait in the dense greenery and shade till the men went back to their rude meal, he gently slipped between the reeds and slid into the water, swimming softly till he reached the skiff, loosened it, pushed it before him round the first curve, when he clambered in and paddled away for dear life: paddled all day, into sunset, into twi-

light, into starlight—such starlight as sifted down through the great shadows of the swamp and the cypress-lined and moss-hung banks of the creek. At last he was in the Roanoke, at last in the open water of the sound, where a swell would have swamped the frail skiff, but where the night was singularly still and soft—though, as it was, he was obliged to paddle all upon one side to keep his boat on the course which he laid for himself by the stars. When he came, after a weary while, in sight of the picket vessel of the fleet, and, after what seemed a longer and still wearier while, within hail, he gave his “Ship ahoy!” and dropped, gasping, benumbed, and half dead, into the bottom of the boat. But immediately on his hail the vessel had slipped her cable, and had got out her boats to take measures against infernal machines, firmly convinced that the skiff was a piece of retaliation on the part of the rebels, and, in response to his assertion that he was Lieutenant Cushing, loudly assuring him that Lieutenant Cushing was no longer in existence; and it was still some time before he found himself on board, refreshed, clothed, and in his right mind, and on the way to the flag-ship, where, in honor of his return, rockets were thrown up and all hands called to cheer ship, even before the success of his expedition was announced. And for once valor had its due acknowledgment and reward.

JOHN AND I.

“COME, John,” said I, cheerfully, “it really is time to go; if you stay any longer I shall be afraid to come down and lock the door after you.”

My visitor rose—a proceeding that always reminded me of the genius emerging from the copper vessel, as he measured six feet three—and stood looking reproachfully down upon me.

“You are in a great hurry to get rid of me,” he replied.

Now I didn’t agree with him, for he had made his usual call of two hours and a half: having, in country phrase, taken to “sitting up” with me so literally that I was frequently at my wit’s end to suppress the yawn that I knew would bring a troop rushing after it.

He was a fine, manly-looking fellow, this John Cranford, old for his age—which was the rather boyish period of twenty-two—and every way worthy of being loved. But I didn’t love him. I was seven years his senior; and when, instead of letting the worm of concealment prey on his damask cheek, he ventured to tell his love for my mature self, I remorselessly seized an English Prayer-book, and pointed sternly to the clause, “A man may not marry his grandmother.” That was three years ago; and I added, encouragingly, “Besides, John, you

are a child, and don’t know your own mind.”

“If a man of nineteen doesn’t know his own mind,” remonstrated my lover, “I would like to know who should. But I will wait for you seven years, if you say so—fourteen, as Jacob did for Rachel.”

“You forget,” I replied, laughing at his way of mending matters, “that a woman does not, like wine, improve with age. But seriously, John, this is absurd; you are a nice boy, and I like you—but my feelings toward you are more those of a mother than a wife.”

The boy’s eyes flashed indignantly; and before I could divine his intention he had lifted me from the spot where I stood, and carried me, infant fashion, to the sofa at the other end of the room.

“I could almost find it in my heart to shake you!” he muttered, as he set me down with emphasis.

This was rather like the courtship of William of Normandy, and matters promised to be quite exciting.

“Don’t do that again,” said I, with dignity, when I had recovered my breath.

“Will you marry me?” asked John, somewhat threateningly.

“Not just at present,” I replied.

“The great, handsome fellow,” I thought, as he paced the floor restlessly, “why couldn’t he fall in love with some girl of fifteen, instead of setting his affections on an old maid like me? I don’t want the boy on my hands, and I won’t have him!”

“As to your being twenty-six,” pursued John, in answer to my thoughts, “you say it’s down in the family Bible, and I suppose it must be so; but no one would believe it; and I don’t care if you’re forty. You look like a girl of sixteen, and you are the only woman I shall ever love.”

Oh, John, John! at least five millions of men have said that same thing before in every known language. Nevertheless, when you fairly break down and cry, I relent—for I am disgracefully soft-hearted—and weakly promise then and there that I will either keep my own name or take yours. For love is a very dog in the manger, and John looked radiant at this concession. It was a comfort to know that if he could not gather the flower himself, no one else would.

A sort of family shipwreck had wafted John to my threshold. Our own household was sadly broken up, and I found myself comparatively young in years, with a half-invalid father, a large house, and very little money. What more natural than to take boarders? And among the first were Mr. Cranford, and his son, and sister, who had just been wrecked themselves by the death of the wife and mother in a foreign land—one of those sudden, unexpected deaths that leave the survivors in a dazed condition, be-

cause it is so difficult to imagine the gay worldling who has been called hence in another state of being.

Mr. Cranford was one of my admirations from the first. Tall, pale, with dark hair and eyes, he reminded me of Dante, only that he was handsomer; and he had such a general air of knowing every thing worth knowing (without the least pedantry, however) that I was quite afraid of him. He was evidently wrapped up in John, and patient with his sister—which was asking quite enough of Christian charity under the sun, for Mrs. Shellgrove was an unmitigated nuisance. *Such* a talker! babbling of her own and her brother's affairs with equal indiscretion, and treating the latter as though he were an incapable infant.

They staid with us three years, and during that time I was fairly persecuted about John. Mrs. Shellgrove wrote me a letter on the subject, in which she informed me that the whole family were ready to receive me with open arms—a prospect that I did not find at all alluring. They seemed to have set their hearts upon me as a person peculiarly fitted to train John in the way he should go. Every thing, I was told, depended on his getting the right kind of wife.

A special interview with Mr. Cranford, at his particular request, touched me considerably.

"I hope," said he, "that you will not refuse my boy, Miss Edna. He has set his heart so fully upon you, and you are every thing that I could desire in a daughter. I want some one to pet. I feel sadly lonely at times, and I am sure that you would just fill the vacant niche."

I drew my hand away from his caress, and almost felt like hating John Cranford. Life with him would be one of ease and luxury; but I decided that I had rather keep boarders.

Not long after this the Cranfords concluded to go to housekeeping, and Mrs. Shellgrove was in her glory. She always came to luncheon now in her bonnet, and gave us minute details of all that had been done and talked of about the house in the last twenty-four hours.

"It is really magnificent," said she, lengthening out each syllable. "Brother has such perfect taste; and he is actually furnishing the library, Miss Edna, after your suggestion. You see, we look upon you quite as one of the family."

"That is very good of you," I replied, shortly; "but I certainly have no expectation of ever belonging to it."

Mrs. Shellgrove laughed as though I had perpetrated an excellent joke.

"Young ladies always deny these things, of course; but John tells a different story."

I rattled the cups and saucers angrily;

and my thoughts floated off not to John, but to John's father, sitting lonely in the library furnished after my suggestion. Wasn't it, after all, my duty to marry the family generally?

The house was finished and moved into, and John spent his evenings with me. I used to get dreadfully tired of him. He was really too devoted to be at all interesting, and I had reached that state of feeling that, if summarily ordered to take my choice between him and the gallows, I would have prepared myself for hanging with a sort of cheerful alacrity.

I locked the door upon John on the evening in question, when I had finally gotten rid of him, with these feelings in full force; and I meditated while undressing on some desperate move that should bring matters to a crisis.

But the boy had become roused at last. He too had reflected in the watches of the night; and next day I received quite a dignified letter from him, telling me that business called him from the city for two or three weeks, and that possibly on his return I might appreciate his devotion better. I felt inexpressibly relieved. It appeared to me the most sensible move that John had made in the whole course of our acquaintance, and I began to breathe with more freedom.

Time flew, however, and the three weeks lengthened to six without John's return. He wrote to me, but his letters became somewhat constrained; and I scarcely knew what to make of him. If he would only give me up, I thought; but I felt sure that he would hold me to that weak promise of mine, that I should either become Edna Cranford or remain Edna Carrington.

"Mr. Cranford" was announced one evening, and I entered the parlor fully prepared for an overdose of John, but found myself confronted by his father.

He looked very grave; and instantly I imagined all sorts of things, and reproached myself for my coldness.

"John is well?" I gasped, finally.

"Quite well," was the reply, in such kind tones that I felt sure there was *something* wrong.

What it was I cared not, but poured forth my feelings impetuously to my astonished visitor.

"He must not come here again!" I exclaimed. "I do not wish to see him. Tell him so, Mr. Cranford! tell him that I had rather remain Edna Carrington, as he made me promise, than to become Edna Cranford."

"And he made you promise this?" was the reply. "The selfish fellow! But, Edna, what am I to do without the little girl I have been expecting? I am very lonely—so lonely that I do not see how I can give her up."



Photomount
Pamphlet
Binder
Gaylord Bros.
Makers
Syracuse, N. Y.
PAT. JAN 21, 1908

UNIVERSITY OF N.C. AT CHAPEL HILL



00032757981

FOR USE ONLY IN
THE NORTH CAROLINA COLLECTION
